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Understanding Insurgency:

The Condition behind the Conflict

by Robert C. Jones

United States Special Operations Command is currently in the process of finalizing a 2011 update to their Strategic Appreciation of the global environment published in 2008. As part of that effort I was contracted to provide a short perspective on the strategic nature of insurgency. The following is my submission to that effort. The thoughts and perspectives as presented here are solely my own.

Introduction

Ask 25 experts for their perspective on counterinsurgency and one will hear answers that group into 3-4 broad categories. Ask those same experts about what *causes* insurgency, and one hears terms like “complexity,” “wicked problem,” or “they are all unique.” This overwhelming uncertainty regarding the problem itself translates directly into a corresponding uncertainty in crafting the right balance of activities to apply in any given situation. If one cannot define the problem, how does one know which effects are attributable to what action; or what order or priority of actions should shape the operational design? What value is there in developing expertise in the complex mosaic of history, culture and governance that uniquely shapes every society where such conflicts emerge if one does not understand the base context of the problem one seeks to solve? Of all the challenges attributable to counterinsurgency campaigns, attaining any degree of consensus among the interested parties as to the nature of the problem is perhaps the most difficult of all.

Understanding insurgency is particularly critical for Special Operations Forces (SOF), as Insurgency is the common hub connecting the spokes of the three Core SOF Operations of COIN, UW and FID.¹ As doctrinal operations, each of these are within our ability to shape, constrain and define however best suits our purpose. Insurgency itself however, is not a doctrinal operation. More accurately, insurgency is the natural result of powerful human dynamics that shape the relationships between those who govern, and those who are governed. Notably, many of the strategic challenges dominating the news and foreign policy discussions today are shaped by, or interact with, a wide range of suppressed and active insurgencies around the world. Governments challenged by insurgency tend to *define* insurgency in convenient terms. The problem with that approach is that such definitions too often become an obstacle to effective COIN. Offered here is that it is far more important to *understand* insurgency than it is to define it. One must then capture that understanding in a manner that facilitates the development of effective foreign and domestic policies and operational designs. This effort to capture the essence of insurgency explores the following concepts:

¹ COIN = Counterinsurgency; UW = Unconventional Warfare; FID = Foreign Internal Defense.

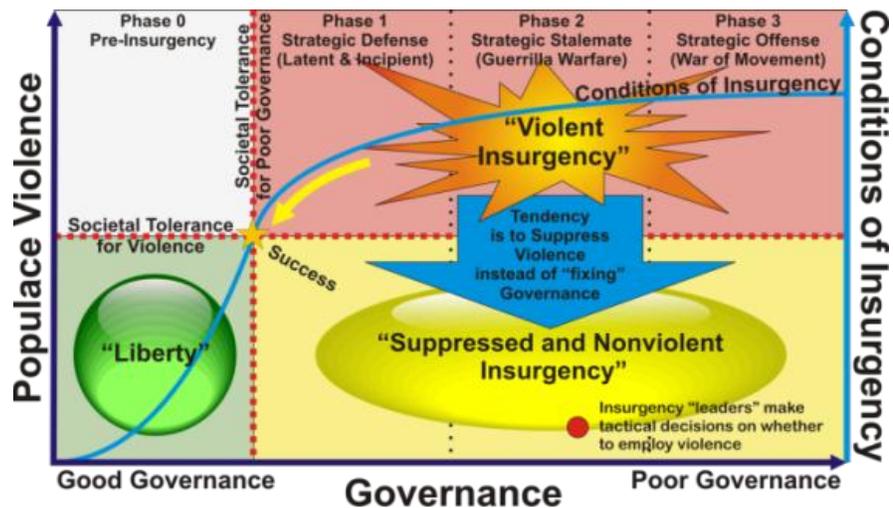
1. The inherent simplicity and immutable nature of insurgency,
2. Insurgency as illegal politics rather than warfare,
3. The primary role of government in both “radicalizing” and “deradicalizing” a populace,
4. Thinking of Insurgency as a *condition*, as well as a form of conflict,
5. The linkage of insurgency to fundamental aspects of human nature,
6. How Western bias derived from centuries of colonialism and containment hinder effective COIN,
7. How governmental bias in general hinder effective COIN, and lastly,
8. What all of this means in the current and emerging environment.

The Nature and Conditions of Insurgency

The nature of insurgency is arguably as universal and stable as the very human nature in which it is rooted; while at the same time as diverse as the eras, cultures and populaces it manifests within. Insurgency is perhaps best understood if taken out of the context of warfare² and viewed as both a *condition within a populace* as well as a *form of conflict*. This perspective allows two things. First, it allows evolution from a perspective that tends to define a conflict in terms of how it manifests (size, degree of violence, parties, etc) to one that defines a conflict in terms of its causal roots. A conflict’s classification as an insurgency should be determined by how/why it begins, not based upon the tactics employed as it runs its course. This in turn allows the focus of COIN to shift from a reactive treatment of the tactical *symptoms* of insurgency, to a much more enduring and proactive treatment of the strategic *conditions* from which such conflicts emerge.

In this light, the most effective “COIN” is proactive and occurs long before any conflict occurs and is in the day to day efforts of civil government.³ It is the nature of governance as perceived by the governed populace that drives the development of the necessary conditions for any insurgency or UW effort to take root.

Viewed with this understanding, the *conditions of insurgency* are perhaps best summarized as *poor governance*. The *conflict of insurgency* then, is simply an illegal political challenge to



² FM 3-24 “Counterinsurgency” opens with the position that “Insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN) are complex subsets of warfare.”

³ In “Counterinsurgency Warfare – Theory and Practice” David Galula expresses the position of government bias very well with his view that “...only one – the insurgent – can initiate a revolutionary war, for counterinsurgency is only an effect of insurgency.” Offered here is that it is actually insurgency that is an effect of poor governance.

government, rising from a base of support within some significant and distinct segment, or segments, of the populace; and employing any mix of violent and non-violent tactics. As such, insurgency is not particularly complex, is rarely warfare, and the primary source of population radicalization is typically the government. In this context facts and metrics measuring effectiveness of governance or attrition of insurgent forces pale in importance to a simple understanding of the *perceptions* of the affected populace along a few critical criteria.

The criteria that define the critical perceptions within a populace effectively “radicalized” by their own government are bundled here as “good governance.” As governance becomes more “poor” the *conditions of insurgency* grow. The same conditions that fuel honorable and patriotic movements are also often exploited by “malign actors,” both internal and external to that populace. There will always be those within a state who seek to leverage an insurgent populace for self-serving purposes. Such conditions are often co-opted to serve the purposes of external powers as well. Understanding this tendency for exploitation, it is far more important to separate the reasonable grievances of the people from the agendas and ideologies of such actors, be they “malign” or well-intended in their purposes, than it is to create some physical separation between the insurgent and the populace he emerges from. It is this ability to separate and understand distinct aspects of the problem from the many resultant symptoms of the problem that facilitates clear understanding and effective approaches to resolving both the conditions and the conflict of insurgency that is necessary for a durable result.

Insurgency is a natural response to critical perceptions within distinct and significant segments of the populace and typically manifests in some combination of three broad categories of action: *revolution*, *separatism*, and *resistance*. Most populaces perceive their governance to be tolerably good, resulting in generally stable conditions; however, as such perceptions degrade within distinct and significant segments of the populace, the conditions of insurgency grow. When this occurs it places ever increasing demands on the government to either undergo *evolution* to address these concerns or increase their security capacity to suppress the resultant illegal popular *revolution*. In broadest terms there grows a fundamental desire for *liberty*⁴ within a populace where perceptions of poor governance produce conditions of insurgency. This is true if the populace’s goals are *revolutionary*, to change some part or whole of the existing government (such as the Afghan Taliban leadership in Pakistan or the recent uprisings in North Africa); *separatist*, to break some distinct region from the whole to form a new state (such as the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, or Kurds in Northern Iraq); or a *resistance*, to challenge some foreign occupation (such as the rank and file Taliban in Afghanistan).

Different segments of a populace often react very differently to the same conditions according to their unique perspectives. As causation radiates outward from the government in the form of policies and action, it is how these are received and perceived by the populace that determines how and where conditions of insurgency will develop. A classic example is Iraq, where all three forms of insurgency occurred at the same time following Western Coalition operations to remove Saddam Hussein, resulting in a mix of revolutionary, separatist, and resistance insurgency. Much of this causation was in the form of long-suppressed grievances over the course of Hussein’s reign that were set in motion once the coalition removed the existing regime; the resistance, however, was directly attributable to the presence of the

⁴ “Liberty,” while a universal concept, has unique components depending upon the time, manner and place of the people in question. To attempt to apply a templated perspective is to risk intervening where no intervention is necessary or desired; or to shape some outcome in a manner that pleases the intervening party more than those they seek to assist.

coalition. Complicating Iraq considerably was the subsequent intervention of al Qaeda acting in a very state-like way, conducting UW to leverage Sunni resistance, and also conducting direct guerrilla warfare against the coalition through the foreign fighters they recruited and imported from latent nationalist insurgencies around the region. The tendency to conflate such diverse threats based on *how they appear*, rather than to distinguish the same based on *why they formed*, produces the type of long, frustrating conflicts that have contributed to the branding of insurgency as “complex.” Simple understanding of fundamental insurgency helps to overcome this situational complexity.

Looking past the obvious tactical and cultural differences between historic insurgencies, one sees a common set of drivers rooted in the perceptions of the aggrieved segment of the populace begin to emerge. The most critical perceptions appear to be *legitimacy*, in the recognition by the governed of the right of their government to govern them; *justice*, in how the people feel about the rule of law as it is applied to them; *respect/dignity*, in how this distinct segment of society perceives they are treated as a matter of some immutable status; and lastly *hope*, in the belief that trusted, certain and legal means to effectively address such grievances exist. Hope is the great off-ramp from insurgency. A government faced with growing conditions of insurgency can create more positive effect through a few pen strokes creating modest enhancements of hope, particularly those that go directly to the other critical perceptions, than by any amount of effort designed to simply suppress the symptoms of these conditions. Understanding the importance of these critical perceptions also allows the operational design for any intervention to be much more finely tailored and focused for an efficiency and effectiveness not found in broader threat-focused or population-focused approaches.⁵

Understanding Western Bias and Insurgency

Hundreds of years of Western colonialism followed by 65 years of Cold War containment-driven interventions have combined to shape a powerful bias in Western counterinsurgency theory, practice and doctrine. Such interventions always prioritize the interests of the intervening party over the interests of the host; typically involve efforts to either create or sustain a host nation government who the intervening party believes will serve those interests; and are typically followed by what is often generations of engagement to protect that government against any internal or external challengers who might put those same interests at risk. Governmental relationships with such an imbalance of power and purpose are inherently dysfunctional. Such interventions tend to degrade perceptions of legitimacy of their own government in the affected populace, while at the same time enabling those host governments, grown reliant on the protection of that strong external partner, to act with growing impunity toward the very people they are sworn to serve.

Modern counterinsurgency theory and doctrine is well rooted in efforts to maintain colonies or to contain some ideological threat. The writings of heralded COIN theorists and practitioners such as Frank Kitson, David Galula, Roger Trinquier and Bernard Fall; and even the USMC Small Wars Manual; the wealth of COIN products generated in the 1960s and since 9/11; and the current FM 3-24 “Counterinsurgency,” are all derived from the experiences and lessons learned from historic examples of intervention and power imbalance. While there is a wealth of excellent material within all of the above to draw upon, they are also all best read with

⁵ Jones, Robert C., “The Jones Insurgency Model – A Tool for the Prevention and Resolution of Insurgency,” Small Wars Journal, May 18, 2010.

a critical eye to the corrupting influence of the respective eras and operations they are based upon. The long shadow of the controlling nature of such interventions continues to loom over approaches in Iraq, Afghanistan and the larger war against al Qaeda. These perspectives also shape how the West understands and responds to the dynamics at play across the Middle East in the Arab Spring revolutions.

For the US the controlling nature of Western COIN history creates a unique burden. The hard realities of leading the Cold War effort to contain threats and secure vital interests for the West forced necessary compromises of the very values the US was founded upon. While European powers are largely unapologetic for their colonial past, the US was born of insurgency and has long been a loud voice in proclaiming universal values⁶ and calling for others to withdraw from their colonial possessions. This has created a growing conflict between the principles the US proclaims and the realities of her foreign policies and engagement. Much of the popular unrest among Muslim populaces that challenge allied governments and our own domestic security today is rooted in governments that have grown disconnected from their own populaces over time. The very nature of relationships with Western powers have contributed significantly to the powerful discontent internal to these states, and have left a clear causal trail that reaches back to our very shores. This, more than any ideology, is the basis for transnational terrorism perpetrated by Muslim populaces against the West.

This is not to imply that ideology is unimportant, but it is to recognize that it is an importance that flows both ways. US political ideology is built upon a rather radical principle recognizing in any populace perceiving their government to have devolved into despotism, or poor governance, that *“it is their right; it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”*⁷ This is a concept few governments ascribe to, and truth be told, one that a modern US struggles to honor as well. Arab Spring is merely the most recent example of the conflict of interests that such popular uprisings create for US policy makers. When faced with the hard choice of supporting a longtime ally on one hand, or the upholding of this venerable American principle on the other, the US tends to land on whichever side of the fence is perceived to best support her interests as defined by the administration in power at that time. Ideology does not create conditions of insurgency, but it definitely colors how those conditions are perceived. The al Qaeda movement has artfully applied an ideology rooted in Islam to leverage long suppressed conditions of insurgency across the Middle East. These populaces, long held in check by some of the most oppressive regimes on the planet (many of them US allies), are the true power behind the al Qaeda movement⁸. The conflict between US action and US ideology serves to strengthen al Qaeda’s bid for relative influence in the region.

Understanding Governmental Bias and Insurgency

Several factors contribute to governmental bias against insurgency. First is the fact that by definition the government is the legal party being challenged by the insurgent, who in turn is

⁶ The US National Security Strategy makes this assertion that some of our values are universal.

⁷ US Declaration of Independence, 1776.

⁸ Freedom House ranks the Arab states across North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula as largely “not free” with a couple states rising to “partly free” status. Of note, the criteria applied by Freedom House, while a bit more prescriptive, are closely related to those perceptions deemed here to be the primary drivers of insurgency.

always the illegal party. The “rule of law” always favors the government.⁹ Second is the reality that government leaders rarely accept responsibility for their contribution to insurgent causation. The line between *responsibility* and *fault* blurs rapidly in politics, and leaders who take responsibility for the government’s role in insurgency are as apt to be defeated by their legal political competitors as they are by the insurgent.

This same governmental bias hinders clear-eyed approaches to what the West calls “transnational terrorism” as well. When a nationalist insurgent becomes convinced that success at home can only come through the breaking of the support of some powerful external party, he quickly becomes “transnational” in his perspective and reach. When faced with powerful domestic and foreign governmental opponents, and denied effective access to legal means of political recourse, terrorist tactics are about all the insurgent has at his disposal to generate influence and advance his cause. The modern rise of non state actors (NSAs), such as al Qaeda, are no more a “global insurgency” today than the US or the USSR were in their leveraging of insurgency during the Cold War. These NSAs employ modern information technology to run networked UW campaigns designed to leverage a wide range of nationalist causes, individuals and organizations in support of their own agendas and interests. While the rise of NSAs are a new aspect to insurgency, *the fundamental dynamics of insurgency remain unchanged*. Thus, just as domestic policy is a primary driver of conditions of insurgency, so too is foreign policy a primary driver of conditions of transnational terrorism.

Needless to say, It is dangerous political ground for any US official to acknowledge the contributions of generations of US containment policies as having any responsibility in producing the conditions of insurgency that are exploited across so many populaces where al Qaeda draws it’s greatest support and carries the most influence. Such concessions of responsibility are quickly converted to admissions of fault by political challengers and partisan media. It is this political reality that drives the tendency to focus on external problems to solve and threats to defeat, often with military forces in the lead. This is unfortunate, as typically the primary drivers of such conflict are internal, with the most effective measures well within the firm grasp of the challenged civil government to address.

This bias is likely why the West has made such a focused study of *counterinsurgency*, far more than of insurgency itself. Even that limited approach is typically from the perspective of an intervening party seeking to sustain some weaker foreign partner in power rather than from the perspective of the party being challenged directly at home. Modern COIN and CT theory does little to move past this perspective rooted in past colonial and Cold War containment interventions. The overwhelming volume of theories spawned since the attacks of 9/11 are equally balanced between blaming everything on the radicalizing effects of Islamist ideology, or alternatively, speculating in various ways regarding the effects of globalization in changing the very nature of insurgency. Neither approach stands up well to a strict scrutiny based upon a fundamental, holistic, and humanistic understanding of the dynamic of insurgency itself. Perhaps the most powerful metric of the flaws in modern theory and approaches lies in the results to date. While some 10 years of warfare by the US has served to squeeze the proverbial

⁹ Most discussions of the Arab Spring begin with Tunisia. An argument may be offered that the vote for secession in Sudan kicked off the Arab Spring as the preconditions precipitating changes in other countries were present in Sudan as well. The big difference is that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) vote was a legally mandated “insurgency” while no such trusted, legal and certain recourse for such change exists in countries where Arab Spring is either active or threatening to become active soon.

terrorism balloon, it has done little to resolve transnational terrorism or reduce the nationalist conditions of insurgency upon which it relies.

Applying a Strategic Appreciation of Insurgency

As Albert Einstein wisely cautioned, *"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."* By viewing insurgency as a continuum demanding constant management, rather than as a war to win or a threat to defeat, it provides a critical shift in perspective.¹⁰ In realizing that conditions of insurgency exist to some degree within every state and between every populace and their government, one comes to realize that the best COIN is civilian-led and preventative in nature. It is only in its rare and extreme forms that insurgency approaches the realm of warfare. At the interstate level this means that foreign policies must guard against adopting approaches apt to disrupt local processes of legitimacy, or that might tempt some partner government to slip into either accidental or intentional habits of treating their populaces with impunity. At the intrastate level it means maintaining a diligent commitment to the provision of good governance,¹¹ coupled with vigilance in monitoring conditions of insurgency across the complex mosaic of populaces of which most states are comprised. Such a perspective also highlights the value of designing government so as to guard against the types of abuses most apt to increase conditions of insurgency, and as important, to secure rights in the populace designed to ensure that legal off-ramps from insurgency are always available.¹²

A strategic appreciation of insurgency is doubly critical when a powerful nation contemplates intervention in some foreign insurgency where they believe their own interests may be at risk. Historically such expeditionary interventions sought to ensure victory by the party assessed to best support those foreign interests in exchange for such assistance.¹³ In the emerging information environment, however, the ultimate costs of such interventions quickly exceed the benefits when that outcome is counter to the will of the affected populace. The primary reason for this "inflation" is that control of information is vital to control of a populace, and as "friendly despots" can no longer control information they can no longer uphold their end of any bargain made at the expense of the people they serve. Increasingly it will be a clear understanding of how critical segments of a populace perceive their government, rather than assessments of some specific threat or of a nation's security force capacity that provides the insights most critical to the design and implementation of effective foreign policy and engagement.

¹⁰ This continuum is depicted in the insurgency diagram supra on page 2. Most government-populace relationships would plot somewhere in the lower left quadrant identified as "liberty." It is only as perceptions of governance degrade along the critical criteria that conditions begin to exceed the capacity of civil government to manage and require additional security capacity to either keep the insurgency suppressed, or deal with the insurgency if it goes active.

¹¹ "Good Governance" is always as uniquely assessed by the various distinct and significant populace groups that make up every society. Just as "the customer is always right" (regardless of how irrational) in business, so too is the populace always right in assessments of governance.

¹² The US Constitution is a masterpiece of COIN, written for that express purpose by men who had grown to maturity as an oppressed minority; prevailed as insurgents, and in the summer of 1787 found themselves as counterinsurgents in a nation made of 13 diverse sovereign states struggling under raw democracy to develop the trust necessary to work effectively together. In contrast, the Constitution of Afghanistan formed a virtual monopoly of governance in the former Northern Alliance, and converted traditional Afghan patronage into a "Ponzi scheme" where virtually all key officials from the District level and above owe their patronage to the President. The trust created in the first case allowed the US to grow and flourish; while in the second case seeming small differences virtually assure distrust, insurgency and corruption.

¹³ In the cold pragmatism of retrospect, the grievances of the populace tend to seem more rational, and the concerns of intervening party tend to seem overblown.

While the option of military intervention must always be a viable reality, leading with policy and diplomatic intervention to encourage the creation or repair of legal off-ramps from insurgency by the host nation government should provide the best results at the lowest cost. This is the real power of *hope*. In understanding the political essence of insurgent causation and the value of legal off-ramps for avoiding the illegal responses that characterize insurgency, a powerful intervening power can better secure their foreign interests through mediation than through occupation. Understanding and respecting traditional perspectives regarding how a populace bestows and sustains legitimacy of government also helps avoid well intended errors by an intervening power. President Johnson's commitment to the passing of the trilogy of landmark civil rights legislation domestically in the 1960s is a classic example of how such measures can contribute to an enduring stability. In contrast, President Eisenhower's support to Diem's cancelation of the nationwide elections that were predicted to sweep Ho Chi Minh into the Presidency of a united Vietnam in 1956 should serve to warn of the potential consequences of closing or manipulating any populace's legal options.¹⁴ No amount of good tactical engagement and years of hard effort are apt to overcome a fatally flawed strategic construct that is often established at the very start.

Finally, while the tendency of the military is to define insurgency in terms of warfare, it is in understanding the fundamental political roots of insurgency that is essential to providing the right force and; to the design and execution of effective and efficient COIN, FID and UW operations. Even quality SOF engagement at the local level is not apt to overcome flawed political structures at the national level, so a strategic context must always be well established from the very beginning of any engagement, and that context must be guided by a keen understanding of the nature of insurgency. Even seemingly benign capacity building operations are a double-edged sword, and must always be entered into with a clear understanding of how such enhanced capacity is apt to be employed. A security force employed to suppress the populace is as damning of the nation that helps train and equip that force as it is of the nation that ultimately employs it for such a controversial purpose. Where possible it is best to seek to narrowly tailor security and development programs to efforts designed to improve perceptions of respect and justice across the entire affected populace. Such efforts are likely to be far less disruptive and more efficient and enduring than the massive "Clear-Hold-Build" and development operations promoted in recent COIN doctrine.

The speed and availability of information is indeed a new and powerful enabler being leveraged by populaces and non-state actors around the globe to bring illegal challenges to existing power structures and systems of government. The complexity of issues and factors in play among the many emerging and active insurgencies around the globe is both undeniable and overwhelming. Beneath all of that, however, beats this core dynamic of insurgency and it is in understanding the simplicity of insurgency that one finds the solid ground to build upon.

Thinking about Insurgency Operations – The Evolving Character of Insurgency

Modern authors and scholars of *counterinsurgency* have theorized a distinct evolution in the character of insurgency as a socio-cultural phenomenon and political strategy. What they really focus on, however, are how the operational frameworks and tactics adopted by insurgent leaders and populaces have evolved to leverage the information technology of the modern age.

¹⁴ This gave rise to the famous "domino theory," rationalizing US intervention to "Do what was necessary to avoid losing South Vietnam by force" in order to contain communist influence from expanding into Southeast Asia.

This same information technology has also empowered non-state actors, most notably al Qaeda, to conduct UW across diverse populaces in a very state-like way. The populist or Maoist notion of insurgency, which is population-centric and “amongst the people” who support a charismatic leader (with resources and safe haven), is still alive and well, particularly in South Asia. In the very different culture and terrain of the Middle East, where al Qaeda has focused their UW efforts, Maoist ideologies do not resonate well, and with modern information technology the organizational aspect of Maoist phases are also less important. Among the oppressed populaces of the Middle East, a networked approach, employing Islamist ideologies and coordinated by al Qaeda, has thrived. This is not to imply that al Qaeda *caused* these insurgencies, for they certainly did not. Al Qaeda has, however, very effectively leveraged modern technology to run a resilient, networked UW campaign to co-opt the latent energy of numerous nationalist insurgencies in support of their own agenda.

Many have described these tactics as a new prominent form of insurgency with a global nature. This body of work and literature has spawned terms like “Global Guerrilla,” “Accidental Guerrilla,” “Insurgent Archipelago,” and “3rd and 4th Forces” and “Global Insurgency” to describe these dynamics.¹⁵ More likely this is simply a natural adaptation of tactics to the technology of the day, and the culture of the populaces involved.

Unconventional Warfare and Insurgency are inexorably linked. The same information technology and social media empowering suppressed insurgencies to erupt rapidly and to organize on the fly without the benefit of a methodical Maoist organization phase are employed by al Qaeda to conduct UW without the benefit of a state to draw upon. Such tools make it virtually impossible to “separate the insurgent from the populace,” or for an oppressive regime to “control their populace.” These information technology advances also serve to render the time honored strategy of enlisting and supporting “friendly dictators” to secure vital interests in some far corner of the globe an obsolete tool of statecraft. Populaces are now empowered, so how domestic and foreign policies affect populaces must be taken more fully into account than in eras past. This is not an evolution of insurgency so much as it is an evolution of the tools and the tactics employed to *operationalize* insurgency.

It is important to note that not every illegal non-state challenge to government is insurgency. The employment of these same tools that empower insurgency are being employed to empower criminal enterprises and coups by small bands to grab power as well. If one does not appreciate the critical distinctions between such motivations for action it becomes easy to conflate and confuse similar looking situations for something they are not. A politically motivated insurgency in Columbia that gets into the criminal drug business is a very different situation than a profit motivated criminal drug business in Mexico that grows to challenge government. Both may appear very similar, but by understanding the insurgent roots of the former and the criminal roots of the latter one avoids an inappropriate conflation based on appearance and similar attributes.

Modern information technology has indeed changed the face of insurgency; in the tactics employed, the speed of organization, the interconnection of disparate populaces, and in the breaking of the monopoly of states in the conduct of unconventional warfare. The nature of insurgency, however, appears largely unchanged. A nationalist insurgent is far more likely to

¹⁵ John Robb, *Brave New War*; John MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*; and Steven Metz, *Rethinking Insurgency*.

serve as a “transnational terrorist” in today’s environment where the interests of nationalist movements and non-state actors converge. There is no putting that genie back in the bottle. Speed, tactics, and operational design for all aspects of Insurgency, COIN, FID and UW operations must evolve to meet these changes. The underlying dynamic of insurgency, however, is rooted in human nature and as such remains relatively stable. Appreciating the nature of insurgency and being able to distinguish where insurgency applies, and where it does not, is what will enable the design and implementation of effective prevention, sustainment, and response.

In the final analysis, it is now what we *know* that is important, it is what we *understand*. After all, *insurgency is simple*.

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